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SECURITY OF THE ARABIAN GULF

BY

BG SAAD ALSHEHRI
Saudi Arabia Army

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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by

BG Saad Alshehri
Saudi Arabia, Army

LTC STEVEN D VOLKMAN
Project Advisor

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U.S. Army War College
CARLISLE BARRACKS, PENNSYLVANIA 17013

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: BG Saad Al Shehri

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Throughout history, foreign powers have attempted to exploit the Arabian Gulf's strategic geographic position. Conveniently located between the east and the west, the Gulf controls important naval and land trade routes linking Asia, Africa, and Europe. Oil discoveries have turned the Gulf into an internationally disputed area, given the importance of oil western economic interests. The strategic value of the Gulf is also attributed to the link it provides between air bases in South Asia with NATO bases in Southwest Europe. As such, the security of the region is not only vital for the states of the area, but also for all industrial nations. This paper explores the dynamics of security in this region and offers recommendations for potential policy makers.

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PREFACE

This research project is the culmination of a study of security issues faced by the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and the impacts of these challenges on stability within the Arabian Gulf. LTC STEVE VOLKMAN provided valuable guidance and direction on this project. His advice and assistance was invaluable.

SECURITY OF THE ARABIAN GULF

INTRODUCTION

It has been eleven years since the fall of 1990, when the United States and Saudi Arabia led an international coalition to oppose, and ultimately reverse, Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. In the months which followed the August 2, 1990 Iraqi invasion, the conservative nation states of the Gulf openly acknowledged their dependence on outside military assistance by inviting a million foreign troops to help restore Kuwait sovereignty. Much was said at the time about enhancing regional cooperation and defenses once the crisis was over. After 11 years, however, regional security cooperation has made limited progress, and there is little doubt that in the event of any new external threat to Saudi Arabia and the smaller Gulf States, that the assistance of non-Arab nation states will be needed to neutralize any future threats.

The basic problem of Gulf security remains unchanged. Two-thirds or more of the world's proven oil reserves, and most of its excess production capacity (the ability to increase production to make up for shortfalls elsewhere) lies in the Gulf region. One state in that region, Iran, has a population of at least 63 million—significantly larger than all of the others combined, including Iraq with 20 million and Saudi Arabia with about 18 million residents. Regardless of the ideologies or the particular regimes in place in a given country, this is a recipe for geopolitical tension. In a dangerous neighborhood, where some neighbors are very small and weak, but very rich, those who are stronger may be tempted to grab from the weaker neighbors.

The Arabian Gulf will continue to be a crucial area in the international energy market. The region enjoys at least three advantages: it holds approximately 65% of the world's proven crude oil reserves and 33% of its proven natural gas reserves, these resources are extremely cheap to produce, and they are located on well-developed routes close to consumer markets in Europe and Asia. The industrialized world is heavily dependent on oil and gas from the Gulf. Access to those resources is a key strategic interest for all of the major powers. Therefore, the Gulf States have a major role to play in today's world economy. As such, the security of the region is not only vital for the states of the area but also for all industrialized nations. This makes it imperative that the Gulf States take the lead in developing security plan for the region.

HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE GULF

The arm of the Arabian Sea between the Arabian Peninsula on the southwest and Iran on the northeast is known as the Arabian Gulf, a part of the Middle East. It extends from the Strait of Hormuz to Shatt al Arab, a river formed by the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

The Arabian Gulf forms the eastern boundary of the Middle East and the Arab world. The area has been referred to as The Persian Gulf¹.

The Islamic civilization has its roots in the region and the area flourished during the Islamic era, before World War I. The Gulf was to play a particular important role during and after the First World War when Britain acknowledged responsibility for the United Arab Emirates in the south of the Gulf at the time when the Ottomans declared war. During the war, Britain ensured that the rulers of the Gulf maintained a united front fearing that the Ottoman Empire could influence the region's religious persuasion. In 1915, the Darin Agreement was concluded with King Abdul Aziz Al - Saud to gain his support, and in 1916 a similar agreement was reached with the ruler of Qatar which was the first of its kind ever agreed to by the Qatari's.

At the end of World War I in 1918, the British government endeavored to maintain stability in the region and mediated in resolving disputes, such as Al Seeb Settlement [1920] and the Al Aqueer Settlement [1922] to enhance British domination. Germany and the Ottoman Empire were out of the competition in the region as a direct result of their losing the war. Russia had also lost all influence in the region due to the enormous internal change of power with the rise of the Communist revolution in 1917 and its subsequent involvement in sorting out its own internal affairs. The role that the United States adhered to after the world war was based on aiding allies and did not help any country which tried to monopolize the area in any way which could jeopardize the interest of any other countries².

Throughout history, foreign powers have attempted to exploit the Gulf's strategic geographic position. Indeed, conveniently located between east and west, the Gulf controls important naval and land trade routes linking Asia, Africa and Europe. Its value is further enhanced by the role of the Straits of Hormuz as an international outlet for oil into the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.

A number of islands and smaller bays have also added military and strategic importance to the Gulf. Indeed, these are ideal locations to build military bases and screen naval units or nuclear submarines carrying intercontinental ballistic missiles. These islands could be exploited as similarly as Iran has developed the United Arab Emirates Islands which are now in dispute. Oil discoveries have turned the Gulf into an internationally disputed area, given the importance of oil to western economic interests in general, and those of the United States in particular. Oil was discovered in the period between the two World Wars, which led to overall strategic changes. The American interest in the area grew and the region witnessed an influx of workers from other Arab states, India and Pakistan.

The discovery of oil led to border disputes amongst the Gulf Emirates. This was a new phenomenon previously unknown in the history of the Arabian Peninsula and the Arabian Gulf. One of the most important problems was the Buraimi dispute between Muscat and Abu Dhabi on the one hand, and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the other. Such disputes in reality reflected the conflicts of interest between American and British oil exploration companies rather than a bona fide misunderstanding between the Emirates and Saudi Arabia. The discovery of oil also ignited Iranian claims over the States of Bahrain and other island in the Gulf³.

The strategic value of the Gulf is also attributed to the link it provides between air bases in South Asia with NATO bases in southwest Europe. It also provides for the free flow of incoming and outgoing U.S. naval vessels and aircraft. The continued dependence of the industrialized nations on Middle East oil gives the region a pivotal role in the world's economy⁴.

In summary, the Gulf region has had a long history, the key factor being its strategic position on the trade routes between the East and West, a vital military and naval route of importance during World War I, and an essential base on the British route to India. The subsequent discovery of oil in the area has had its political and economic consequences. The discovery of oil served to encourage the United States, to enter the region despite the British dominance. Indeed, because of its vast oil reserves, the Arabian Gulf has attracted the attention of all the countries of the modern world.

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL (GCC)

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was formed by the six Arabian Gulf states of the Arabia Peninsula—Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates—in 1981 to confront their security challenges collectively. The immediate objective was to protect them from the threat posed by the Iran-Iraq War and Iranian-inspired radical Islam. In a series of meetings, chiefs of staff and defense ministers of the Gulf States developed plans for mutual defense and launched efforts to form a joint command and a joint defense network.

The GCC was created to address those interests and to fill the vacuum caused by the breakdown of the Arab unity. The GCC is an organization for promoting peace in the Arabian Gulf area. It aims to bring about integration, coordination, and cooperation in economic, social, military, and political affairs among Arab Gulf states. The GCC has been successful towards its aims and hopes for better future of the region are expected by the people of the region.

SAUDI ARABIA INTEREST AS A GCC MEMBER

Saudi Arabia is focusing its development across all fields: political, diplomatic, economic, educational, health, information, and military. In order to decrease the gap between Saudi and the western nations, and increase the competency of its elements of national power, the Saudi people must possess the capability to face the threat, the hazards, and challenges of the 21st century. The social, intellectual, and historical texture of the Saudi people is not isolated from current modern western political and democratic systems. It seeks to preserve independence of Saudi decisions that reflect Saudi national will. Establishing good relations, with all countries of the world in order to maintain Saudi vital interests is given top priority. It is in Saudi Arabia's interest to always side with international legitimacy and supporting just issues, and remaining committed to the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of states, and in return, rejecting any interference in Saudi internal affairs.

DEFINING GULF SECURITY

Gulf Security is a compound issue. First, there is the question of the security of the Gulf itself as an international naval route which should be available to all countries to use freely just like the Red Sea, the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal. Second, there is the question of insuring security for the countries surrounding the Gulf including Iran and Iraq. Third, there is the question of GCC security which is intended to be harmonious with the regional security of the broader Gulf. This concept could be extended further to security of Arab nations, and the security of the Middle East including Turkey and Israel. All these contexts overlap and may potentially give rise to conflicting interests between nations.

There are various definitions of the concept of security which differ according to one's perspective. One definition may focus on internal aspects with national security meaning the ability of the state to protect its internal values against external threats, therefore requiring the state to be stronger than its rivals. Another may focus on economic mastery as the core of national security. Under this definition, any threat to the economic structure is a threat to national security. A third definition may argue that the security of the state depends on comprehensive development of its economic and security.

The traditional view of national security recognizes both the tangible and the intangible aspects which may be prone to internal and external threats. A secure state according to this definition is one which is well guarded against external invasion and occupation, and whose people are protected from disease poverty and are provided with enough opportunities to lead a fruitful and rewarding existence⁵.

National security may also be defined as the measures adopted by the state to preserve its existence and interests. Brief as it is, this definition involves a variety of political, economic, defense and security issues which together form an indivisible whole⁶.

There is also the individual component. An individual should feel that he and his dependents are safe, having the suitable means of sustenance that satisfies their basic and secondary needs. A comprehensive state-level security means that in addition to safe borders, political, economic, social, and religious stability are guaranteed.

A state is a living entity in dynamic flux which interacts with its surroundings. This dynamic has three main aspects; military (defense expenditure), economic (per capital share of GDP, growth rate and development levels), and political (the costs of sustaining the government as an effective force both internally and externally). Balancing these areas is critical. Indeed, weakness in any of the three disturbs the whole structure⁷.

For this paper Gulf security is defined as providing peace and stability, while avoiding internal or external disruption of the status quo. GCC security in turn should be viewed as the strategic end of the GCC countries to meet their national interests determined by the GCC political leadership to protect the existence, survival, sovereignty and international standing of the countries of the GCC, and assure their active involvement in building Arab national security.

CHALLENGES TO GULF SECURITY

All agree that the Arabian Gulf is a sensitive region, which for strategic and economic reasons, will become over more sensitive in the future. Consider the following challenges facing a regional solution to Gulf Security.

- How can collective security be discussed in the absence of common interests?
- How can collective defense be planned while there are differences of opinion on what the common threat is?
- How can mutual protection be viable in the midst of mutual doubts among regional players?
- How can a common future be shared when such a fragmented present exists?
- What kind of role does Saudi Arabia hope to have in the region as a common aim; is it religious, political, military or economic?
- What are the boundaries of the Gulf area the GCC should concern them selves about?

- What form of security order for the area is required and what are the priorities of the required security⁸.

In order to discuss Gulf security from the GCC perspective, one needs to identify the main players in the region and address their roles or interests in the region. In addition to the GCC members, these regional actors are: Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Israel. International actors are: the United States and Russia. Also worthy of discussion are the threats to the region created by terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, the arms race, and the availability of water.

REGIONAL PLAYERS

The Arabian Gulf states and the outer ring of neighboring countries are currently enjoying a period of relative peace and security. The short to near term security of the region is, however, largely governed by development in two countries—Iran and Iraq. The outlook for those two states is, as has been seen in the past, prone to quickly escalate into military conflict.

IRAN

At the 1996 annual summit of the GCC it was Iran, not Iraq, that was singled out as posing a significant military threat to the region, and engaging in military programs and deployments that exceeded its conventional defense needs. Iran annexed the islands of Abu Musa and Greater and Lesser Tunbs, which it had previously shared with United Arab Emirates since 1971. Persian expansionism, nuclear tendencies, encouragement of religious extremism, and attempts to pit the Shiite population against their own governments pose real threats to the region. The sense of superiority that marked the Shah's era has not been moderated by the revolution; it has taken a rather new, even more dangerous turn from under the Shah. Iranian imperialism was rooted in pre-Islamic Persian history. Today, the ideology of Khomeini's revolution is based on a narrow interpretation of Islam.

The statement and performance of the Iranian leadership on different occasions indicate, five main objectives which dominate Tehran's national security strategy;

- To fill what Iran claims to be a strategic vacuum existing in the Gulf, Central Asia and the Caucasus.
- To modernize and develop its armed forces and assume the role of regional hegemon.
- To prepare for a possible confrontation with international or regional powers.
- To rejuvenate the country's economy.

- To domestically protect the values and principles of the Islamic Revolution and to export such ideals internationally.

Current Iranian military policy is based on the following:

- Acquiring a deterrent air force and advanced missile capabilities.
- Raising the combat readiness of land forces by acquiring modern combat tanks.
- Raising the navy's overseas operation standard by developing submarines and introducing advanced Russian manufactured units.
- Emphasizing surveillance, early warning and electronic warfare systems.
- Seeking to acquire weapons of mass destruction⁹.

The Iranian military tendency now is one of deterrence aimed at achieving armament superiority over its neighbors, particularly in chemical and nuclear weapons. The Iranian leadership has been trying for some time to implement a comprehensive program to rebuild and largely modernize its armed forces, and acquire large stocks of advanced arms and equipment, mainly from China and North Korea. It has also sought to create a domestic military industrial complex capable of developing nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. The Iranian version of Gulf security can be summarized thus:

- Establishing a security arrangement in the region that ensures the independence and territorial sovereignty of the Gulf countries. Such an arrangement is to be based on historical, religious and economic links and be devised by the eight states which make up the Gulf region (the six GCC members plus Iran and Iraq).
- Rejecting any form of foreign interference in the security arrangement of the region.
- Evacuating the Gulf area of traditional weapon stockpiles as well as nuclear, chemical and biological weapons.
- Allowing the presence of Western and U.S. forces in the region, tied to the condition that their numbers be minimized.
- Rejecting a role for Egypt and Syria in Gulf security¹⁰.

Tehran has argued that any security plan excluding Iran as the strongest nation in the region cannot be taken seriously and is doomed to fail. It wants Gulf security to be strictly regional, with no role for external players (particularly Egypt and Syria), or international powers (especially the United States). It also regards the lion's share of Gulf security as being its own, on the grounds that Iran is geographically and socially integral to the region.

Recently Iran received three advanced Russian submarines with a range of approximately 4000 nautical miles and moved them into the Red Sea. The deal was a surprise to military observers since at most Iran requires submarines with a range of 1500-2000 nautical miles to defend its Gulf and Arab shores. The full significance of the deal becomes clear, however, when one considers Iran's expansionist agenda. The Red Sea, for example, is an area in which Tehran is determined to gain and exercise influence.

Iran is also seeking to use its footholds in the Red Sea as well as in Sudan as a springboard into Africa, where it seeks to reap economic benefit and spread the Islamic revolution. Its presence in this area could be a potential threat to oil tankers crossing the Red Sea. Indeed, Iran could politically capitalize on its presence in the region and use it against regional as well as international powers.

IRAQ

Slightly out of step with the GCC singling out Iran as the main threat to peace in the region, Saudi Arabia acknowledges that Saddam Hussein still has the ability to make mischief and wage war at some level against his neighbors. Iraq's intentions have continued to be highly suspect. Indeed, as long as Saddam is in power, the threat remains. At present his ambitions are simply hibernating.

Iraq is the soft spot in any reading of the future of the Gulf region. Iraqi intentions towards its neighbors are unclear. Until the issue of power in Iraq is resolved in a way that promises a new regime and a new phase of domestic, regional and international relations, it will be difficult to assign a specific role for Iraq to play in the security and stability of the region.

The question now is whether Iraq still poses a threat to GCC security. Certainly, as long as Saddam Hussein remains in power, Iraq will continue to be a threat to the Gulf region. He will not forget the GCC stance against him in the war to liberate Kuwait; indeed, he will continue to nurture his ambition to annex Kuwait again and further extend his dreams of leadership and power. Once he feels strong enough to proceed, and realizes that the major powers will let him have his way, he will not spare a moment waiting to take advantage of the situation. It is noticeable that in spite of their ordeal, the Iraqi armed forces still retain 2700 tanks, 2000 artillery units and 350 fighters. The GCC countries combined have only 2000 tanks, 1250 artillery units and 600 fighters¹¹.

At present, Iraq does not pose a significant threat to the GCC countries because Saddam's regime is currently preoccupied with its own survival and providing enough food

supplies for the Iraqi people, while at the same time dealing with the Kurdish encroachment on Iraqi state power.

TURKEY

Turkey's version of Gulf and Middle East security proceeds from its conviction that the security of the Gulf is solely the concern of the countries that make up the area, which therefore have the right to adopt whichever measures and arrangements they find necessary. The arrangement may take the form of bilateral defense agreements even if Turkey is not involved. As for the security of the Middle East, it sees that Iraqi's neighbors--Iran, Syria, Egypt and itself--should all be involved in designing future regional security arrangements. To enhance Gulf security, there is a need to have a Middle East settlement of all political problems, particularly those in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Lebanon, as well as reaching an accord on regional disarmament. According to Turkey, the best approach to developing security arrangements would be to expand the scope of economic cooperation among the countries of the region through joint projects, the abolition of restrictions on trade, and boosting economic integration. Ankara is also anxious to promote democratic practices among the states in the region.

This version of security seeks to establish Turkey as a new economic power in the region. By stressing the right of the regions countries to adopt any necessary arrangements, Turkey is attempting to dispel Arab and Gulf fears that it intends to exert more control over the region. On the other hand, by emphasizing democracy, it is courting the favor of Western nation states to ensure their continued support for its version of Middle East security.

ISRAEL

The conflict between the Arab countries and Israel goes back to its creation in 1948 and the subsequent displacement of the Palestinians. From the Arab perspective, the Israelis have occupied Arab and Palestinian territories. These territories include lands in the Golan Heights, Gaza Strip, and Sinai Peninsula and in the City of Jerusalem.

Some Arab countries such as Egypt and Jordan have recovered their land and entered into a peace treaty with Israel. In addition, some normalization of relations and economic cooperation has been achieved through various peace initiatives with Arab countries, whether openly or secretly. Nonetheless, Israel still represents a major threat to a number of Arab countries.

At the political level, Arabs view Israel as working to exploit what it has achieved with regard to the peace process and normalization of relations with a number of Arab countries.

Specifically, Israel has established relations with the countries of the region, especially the Gulf countries, on a bilateral basis. In addition, Israel has postured itself as a cornerstone for Western interest in the region. This has led to the development of strategic cooperation with those powers and paved the way for additional relationships with other major powers like China. In this way, Israel has increased its regional importance and its central role protector of western interests. Nonetheless, the Palestinian issue remains unsettled. Accordingly, from the Arab perspective, Israel's occupation of Jerusalem and Arab lands in Palestine, Lebanon and Syria constitutes a major threat to the security and stability of the Gulf region.

While posturing itself as a guarantor of U.S. interests in the region, Israel maintains a substantial military capability with which it can threaten its Arab neighbors. This capability includes not only conventional forces, but also nuclear capabilities which can threaten most if not all the Arab capitals and important strategic targets within the region. Israel refuses to allow international monitoring of its nuclear programs, and what Israel wants is to reach the Gulf region where it also has interest in the oil of those countries. Despite denials of its nuclear capabilities by the Israeli government, Shimon Peres, former Prime Minister, stated that Israel had "built a nuclear option not in order to have a Hiroshima but an Oslo." This refers to peace process between Israel and Arabs. Israel considers the Gulf Cooperation Council countries as the main source of funding for the Palestinian Intifadha. From the Arab perspective, Israel seeks to weaken Arab military capabilities and restrict the supply of advanced military hardware to Arab countries, especially to Saudi Arabia, which obtains large supplies of their arms from the United States¹².

The "Palestinian Question" remains the core issue that lies at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian issue involves the perception of the Palestinian right to have their own independent state and return of lands including Jerusalem. Most people in the region are willing to accept a settlement that includes an Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines, the emergence of a sovereign, and independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, and the right of refugees to return and be compensated¹³.

Ongoing peace negotiations conducted under the auspices of the United States/ or Soviet Union have failed to address the fundamental issues of difference between the two sides. From the Arab perspective the peace process has been a disappointment. The government of Benjamin Netanyahu had not undertaken any positive steps towards a positive resolution of the Palestinian issues. Unless the policy changes under Ariel Sharon's new government, confrontation between Israel and the Arab countries is likely to continue.

INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

UNITED STATES

In June of 1951 the United States signed an agreement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to use Dhahran as the first location for a U.S. military presence in the Gulf region and in return, the U.S. was to equip and train the Saudi Armed Forces. Since that time the U.S. interests and aims in the Gulf can be divided into four main areas¹⁴:

- Prestigious interests. These are the natural moral interests. As a super power and the only power qualified to defend Arab nation States, particularly the Gulf States.
- Strategic interest. These interests deal with international balance of power, military and technology. The U.S. seeks to intensify its presence in the area as far as possible. At the same time, it seeks to reduce the Soviet presence and influence, and reduce the Chinese penetration.
- Traditional interest. This refers to the free flow of oil, freedom of navigation of the seas, and safety of the United States citizens abroad.
- Mutual substantial and material interests. These interests represent the nature of relations which link the U.S. with the Arab states generally and Saudi Arabia in particular. It includes the reinforcement of Israel security and strengthening the influence and power of Arab states which have good relations with Israel.

Within those aims and interests, the U.S. strategy may be defined as follows¹⁵:

- Support of friendly states in the area, namely Saudi Arabia and Egypt.
- The attempt to make as many of the Arab states as possible join what is known as the free world.
- The denial of Russia from approaching the Arab oil resources and securing the freedom of passage of U.S. fleets in the seas and straits of the area.
- Use of political, economic and military support as a means of pressure to achieve U.S. aims and policies.
- Exploitation of the area as a flourishing market for its military equipment and weapon systems.

RUSSIA

Russia has devised its own strategy as a means of competing with, but not necessarily confronting the United States. Its strategy is two-pronged. It contains a defensive component

aimed at countering U.S. infiltration of Europe by allowing former members of the Warsaw Pact to join the NATO alliance, and an offensive component of consolidating relations with Iran¹⁶. Meanwhile, Russia has no intention of abandoning Iraq, its old ally in the region. It also seeks to build military and economic ties with GCC states, and establish a stronger economic relationship with Israel. In light of current international developments, the challenge facing Russia is whether it can strike a balance between contesting international as well as direct or indirect regional players in the Gulf in such a way that it serves their best interests. Internationally, Russia has to deal with the foreign influence already existing in the region, as well as with two new powers seeking a foothold there, namely China and Japan. These two countries are seeking new markets for their products and want to be assured of the continued flow of oil. To them, the Gulf is a market not to be ignored. Regionally, Russia should not ignore nor underestimate the influence of Arab states such as Egypt and Syria on the Gulf, although their role in the Gulf security equation is indirect. In addition, it cannot ignore Iran and Iraq. Its relationship with both countries, particularly Iran, continues to flourish.

Russia, as a neighbor of the Gulf, a major naval power, and permanent member of the UN Security Council, is eager to be one of the guarantors of security in the Gulf region. Russia has publicly supported Kuwait's demands for the release and return of all Kuwaiti POWs held by Iraq. Moscow has also postponed claiming the \$ 7 billion it is owed by Baghdad. However, one problematic aspect to this situation is that Russia assists Iran militarily and supplies Tehran with nuclear reactors. This is of serious concern to Gulf security, as it is likely to create instability in the future. To cushion possible negative reactions, Russia is attempting to maintain a balance by repeatedly declaring its support for Arab Gulf states and the rights of the United Arab Emirates to Abu Musa, and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs, the three islands currently occupied by Iran. By adopting such a role, Russia is seeking to maintain and consolidate its presence, dispel GCC doubts, guarantee its military and economic interest in the region, and face the major and regional powers without engaging in direct clashes or endangering the peace and stability of the Gulf.

THREATS TO THE REGION

A main threat to the security of the region is terrorist activities. Terrorism is the use of violence, or the threat of violence, to create a climate of fear. Terrorist violence targets ethnic or religious groups, governments, and political parties, corporations, and media enterprises. Organizations that engage in acts of terror are almost always small in size and limited in resources. Through the publicity and fear generated by violence, they seek to effect political

change on a local or international scale¹⁷. Terrorism in all its forms is strictly prohibited in Islam. Targeting of innocent civilians, women and children like what has happened on September 11, 2001 in the United States, or even in times of war is an unpardonable sin according to the teachings of Islam. GCC countries have condemned this act and sees the continuous vigil is necessary to fight terrorism with an iron hand.

Terrorism has become a day-to-day reality within the Gulf region and internationally. Terrorism has taken on various means and methods. Moreover, terrorists have demonstrated their ability to utilize a wide range of weapons and methods in order to pursue their objective without regard for the lives of innocent women, men, children and the elderly. These methods include assassination, kidnapping, hijacking, bombing, etc.—often with tragic consequences for their victims.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction as another threat to the region has continued to increase. In order to satisfy its needs for capital, Russia has become a principle exporter of all types of military equipment not only to Middle East countries but elsewhere in the world as well.

Iran and Iraq have several sources through which they can acquire weapons of mass destruction. Evidence suggests that Iran and Iraq have already acquired rockets capable of delivering weapon of mass destruction¹⁸. A primary incentive for Arab countries to obtain weapons of mass destruction is to balance the current threat posed by Israel which already possesses such weapons. In addition, Iran and Iraq both desire to acquire them in order to pursue their own political and military objectives within the region. Acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by larger Middle East countries will only encourage the smaller countries to seek like weapons for self-defense. Thus, these actions will lead the region into a spiral of escalation unless the international community can take effective measures to prevent it. Ideally, such weapons could be eliminated in Israel, Iran and Iraq.

Successive waves of arms purchases indicate that this race is still on in the Gulf. The current level of military expenditure in the region has exacerbated internal and external instabilities. Rising defense budgets have disturbed national priorities with less funds being set aside for social programs. This makes the arms race a threat to regional stability.

Water is considered the main element for conflicts in the future between the Middle East countries. This is particularly true as increases in population strain existing resources in the next century¹⁹. Examples include the Dijla and Fourat rivers between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq; the Jordan River between Israel and Jordan; the Nile River between Egypt, Sudan, and Ethiopia; and, the Litany River between Lebanon and Israel. There is a great agreement within the

scientific community that these regions pose significant risk of future conflict arising from shortfalls in water resources.

ROLE OF THE GCC FOR THE SECURITY OF THE REGION

The GCC was founded following the Iranian revolution and the start of the Iran-Iraq war on a Kuwait proposal intent on providing a framework for handling regional crisis's with sufficient authority. The six members of the GCC, initially adopted policies designed, on the one hand, to stand firm against attempts to export the Iranian Revolution, and, on the other hand, to try to mediate a peaceful end to the Iran-Iraq war from a position of neutrality. This objective was soon modified, and became subservient to the need to prevent the war from spilling over into neighboring states. Jordan and Syria had openly backed Iraq and Iran respectively, and, on several occasions during 1980 and 1981, had deployed increased numbers of troops along their common border and placed them on a high state of alert.

The GCC states began thinking of more direct measures to enhance their common defense. Their armed forces conducted the first joint military exercise in 1983. In 1985, a brigade size rapid deployment force, headquartered in Saudi Arabia, was created, drawing troops from all GCC states. By 1986, the GCC had decided the threat of war was rising and a military plan for its own mutual defense was created, called Peninsula Shield. It was to have a military command structure based around the GCC joint brigade and an increasing number of assets dedicated to it. Defense procurement by various members was of a nature which included benefits for the GCC as a whole. For example, in 1987 the Saudis purchased Boeing E-3a Peace Sentinel Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft to generate a comprehensive air picture over the Gulf that could help scramble and direct the air forces of GCC members against air attacks.

Immediately after the 1991 Gulf War, the GCC agreed with the proposal by Sultan Qaboos of Oman proposal that the "Peninsula Shield" Plan be extended to provide for a force of 100,000 men under joint GCC command. The inclusion of armed forces on detachment from Egypt and Syria under the 1991 6 + 2 accord between the GCC and these two regional allies was also agreed upon in principle.

However, Gen. Khalid bin Sultan of Saudi Arabia, former head of joint forces command, believes that a more effective and economical solution would be to have a permanent GCC military command headquarters based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia to oversee coordination efforts. Each GCC member would allocate troops to the headquarters, but would keep its forces on its own soil, save for one or two months of intensive joint exercises every year, which the GCC

command would organize. This would not only enhance the potency of "Peninsula Shield", it would also increase the defense capability of each individual member state. Gen. Khalid Bin Sultan also advocates a policy of "dual rehabilitation" rather than "dual containment" with regard to Iran and Iraq. This process already seems to have started with Jordan being brought in from out of the diplomatic cold after its backing of Iraq during the Gulf War²⁰. He believes, however, that the GCC's military capabilities should be strengthened by defense arrangements not just with Egypt and Syria, but also with Turkey and Pakistan, underpinned by commitments from Britain, France and the U.S. with much more explicit bilateral, and perhaps multilateral, defense cooperation agreements.

RECOMMENDATION

The decision for a security arrangement for the Arabian Gulf should be taken by the GCC states as a first priority with an emphasis to secure area oil reserve and open navigation of the seas. The GCC should design their arrangement in the region without foreign interference, based on the recognition of the nature and scope of current and future threats with clearly defined objectives and means to achieve them.

A comprehensive view of security should be developed taking into account all the relevant internal and external economic, political, social and military components, the national interests of other countries, particularly the industrialized ones, if this security system is to realistically cope with change. The GCC must also encourage the Middle East peace security arrangements for all regional political problems, particularly those in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Lebanon.

The best approach to develop a security arrangement would be to expand the scope of economic cooperation among the countries of the region through joint projects. These countries must also sustain the flow and safe traffic of oil; they must also not neglect the political, social and military aspects. An appropriate military deterrent must be developed by the countries of the region to compensate for insufficient human resources. New technology could satisfy this need. Military training should be boosted to raise professionalism, military weapon and equipment systems should be standardized.

Finally, if there is any Gulf security arrangement, it should serve the interest of the area states and the interest of others who are concerned with oil. This emphasizes the fact that we are living in a world of tangled interest and no nation can survive in isolation from other nations. A general framework has to be identified. The question is whether it will be domestic, regional Gulf-oriented, Arab or international.

CONCLUSION

The outlook for cooperation for the security of the Arabian Gulf will be shaped not only by uncertainty over what Iran and Iraq might do, but also by the Arab-Israeli problem and American policy with regard to Israel. The economic importance of the Middle East means that the security of the region is equally important for the regional states and the Western powers, particularly the U.S. The cooperation for the security is therefore likely to broaden out to include other countries that can offer a contribution toward the defense of the region. This includes countries on the periphery that are developing their own indigenous capabilities, such as Egypt and Turkey, in addition to the U.S. and its western allies.

Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorism and future conflicts over scarce water resources are threats to security of the region. The only solution in the region is to develop and implement a comprehensive approach that addresses all of the major political, economic and military aspects of this complicated problem. Finally it must be remembered and cannot be overemphasized: No permanent peace can be achieved without a satisfactory resolution of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The GCC has no choice but to play an active role to help achieve this end.

WORD COUNT =6678

ENDNOTES

- ¹ John D. Anthony, Arab States of Lower Gulf (MEI, Washington D.C. 1975), 23.
- ² Charles A. Kupchan, The Persian Gulf and the West: The Dilemmas of Security (Boston Allen and Unwin London, Sydney, Wellington, 1987), 210.
- ³ Lt. Col. Mathias Knorr, After the Persian Gulf War, Strategic Research Project (Carlisle Barracks: U.S. Army War College, 1991) 13.
- ⁴ H.R.H General Khaled Bin Sultan Bin Abdelaziz Al Saud, Roundtable Discussion on Gulf Security (The Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, 1998), 3.
- ⁵ Ibid., 5.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid., 6.
- ⁸ Mohammed Al Sayed Said, "Gulf Security and the Arabian Security," Dar Al Khaleej for press and distribution, UAE, November, 1991, p. 3.
- ⁹ Bjorn Moller, Resolving the Security Dilemma in the Gulf Region (The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, 1997), 29.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 30.
- ¹¹ The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 2001 – 2002 (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 134.
- ¹² Sami G. Hajjar, "Security Implications of the Proliferation of weapons of Mass Destruction in the Middle East," SSI, USAWC, Carlisle, 1998, p.36.
- ¹³ George Giacaman and Dag Lonning, "After Oslo, New Realities, Old Problems," Pluto Press, London, UK, 1998, 49.

¹⁴ Abdullah Al Thani, "Future out Look for the Gulf Security," Dar Al Ghad Press, Cairo, 1993, p.32.

¹⁵ Anthony H. Cordesman, "The Gulf and The Search for Strategic Stability," West View Press, Boulder Co. Mansell Publishing Ltd, London England, 1998, p.78.

¹⁶ H.R.H General Khaled Bin Sultan Bin Abdelaziz Al Saud, Roundtable Discussion on Gulf Security (The Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, 1998), 20 – 21.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Abdullah Al Thani, "Future out Look for the Gulf Security," Dar Al Ghad Press, Cairo, 1993, p.33.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

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